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U. S. Department of Agriculture



## Earle Dilatush

*Holly Specialist*

**Route 25**

**Robbinsville, N. J.**



## **1. Will Holly Grow Where I Live?**

Try this interesting little game. Get a pencil and a map of the Eastern United States. Start at Eastport, Me., and draw a line from that point through Augusta, Me., Portland, Me., Springfield, Mass., Poughkeepsie, N. Y., Harrisburg, Pa., York, Pa., Culpeper, Va., Winston-Salem, N. C., Greenville, S.C., then westward to the Mississippi River.

*Holly*, with the right ground and the proper care, will grow almost anywhere from this line to the Atlantic Ocean.

A fact which will surprise many is that latitude is not the real limiting factor in the growing of *Holly* here in the East. Altitude affects much more. You may find it hard to grow *Holly* if you live more than twelve hundred feet above sea level.

Near the ocean you can plant *Holly* without much thought as to location, but as you go higher in altitude it is well to have some protection from the west and north. Use trees, buildings, anything to keep off the sharp, cold, dry winds. A few hemlock trees for a wind barrier will make it practical to grow *Holly* in many places where few people dream it is possible.

It can be grown in hundred of localities north and west of the line you have just drawn. If you live near a lake, pond or river you are indeed fortunate, because *Holly* likes to be near the water. Plant near the water if your land is well drained, but do not plant in wet, swampy ground.

## **2. Will Holly Grow In My Ground?**

*Holly* will grow almost equally well in any kind of soil, whether clay, sand or gravel, if it is properly prepared before planting.

*Holly* will not grow in your old rose border or where the ground has been made alkaline by the use of lime, ground bone or fresh manure. The border or bed where flowers grow so well is usually sweet, too. The ground must be sour for *Holly*. Luckily, this is easily accomplished.

Perhaps the best way is to add plenty of leaf-mold from the nearby woods. Use two or three bushels to the tree; more, if you can get it at a reasonable price. You can hardly use too much. I am growing *Holly* in leafmold a foot and a half thick, and it has the most wonderful root system I have ever seen. In most instances composted manure (not less than three years old—never use fresh manure) added to the leafmold

will help your *Holly*. Do not use maple leaves; they rot quickly and tend to sweeten the soil. Baled peatmoss is good to hold the moisture, but seldom contains the food value of the leafmold from your own oak woods.

### **3. What Is the Best Time of Year to Move Holly?**

If *Holly* has the right root system it can be safely moved anytime when the ground is not frozen too hard. I sell and move more *Holly* in November and December than any other time of the year, due to the Christmas demand. Perhaps the months of April and October are best.

### **4. Shall I Buy A Large Or A Small Holly?**

It seems to me that almost everyone asks this question and I find it a little hard to answer. Of course, if one wishes to spend only a little money the question answers itself, as large *Hollies* cost a lot.

Many people successfully solve it by buying two large *Holly trees*, a male and a female, as large as they can afford, and then finish the planting with smaller trees.

If one lives rather far north I think it best to buy large trees. Old established trees that have seen many bad seasons are hardened and are much more likely to live than little plants only a few years old.

Dig an old established, heavy berry *Holly* with the proper root ball and plant right and you can enjoy *Holly* at its very best in many places where no one has ever seen *Holly*.

### **5. Does Holly Prefer Sun Or Shade?**

I think *Holly* really likes some shade, but has denser foliage and more berries when planted in full sun. Do not spend much thought on sun or shade for your *Holly*; plant where you can see it from your porch or window. Put it where you can enjoy it in winter.

With heavy pruning *Holly* makes an excellent, all purpose, red-berried evergreen shrub or small tree. You may group it by the side of your house, mass it in front of your porch or make a *Holly* hedge.

Replacing the less hardy Old English Boxwood, a closely trimmed specimen *Holly* on each side of the steps leading to your main door will give dignity and distinction to your whole planting.

You will like *Holly* as a background for your Japanese flowering cherry or other flowering shrubs. A beautiful planting can be made with *Holly* and white dogwood.

*Holly* is a permanent tree and will grow in beauty with age, so I like it best planted as a specimen with lots of room to grow.

Seashore winds hurt it little, but some protection from the cold, dry west and north winds will help keep the late winter foliage a brighter and more attractive green and the berries will stay red longer, too. *Holly* requires very little special care, but it will pay you to follow closely the planting directions that follow. Don't skimp on the mulch.

## 6. *What Is the Right Way to Plant My Holly?*

Dig a hole for your tree twice the width and depth of the root ball, even larger will pay. Cart away one-half of the soil you have just dug up and bring back an equal quantity of compost (this composted material should be made up of two parts of leafmold from oak woods and one part old cow manure with some cottonseed meal added); mix the compost thoroughly with your heap of soil and throw some in the bottom of the hole.

Now place your tree in the center of the hole about four inches deeper than it was in the nursery. Fill the hole almost full and add lots of water, several buckets full, and let it settle for a few minutes. Finish with the last six inches of material made up of much more compost, all compost, if you have it to spare.

Remember, use lots of compost and loads of water, as proper soil preparation and careful planting will do more than anything else to make your *Holly* a success.

Do not pile the dirt up around the tree cone shaped, as so many people do their shrubbery. Always leave the soil around your *Holly* level with, or slightly below the surrounding ground. See illustrations 1 and 2.

Many years of experience have taught me that *Holly* planted carefully, as outlined above, will grow to its maximum beauty.

Do not let good friends mislead you by urging that you give some other special treatment. Wish-

ing to outdo their neighbors, a great many people will plant as I have outlined in this discussion, but just cannot resist adding an unreasonable quantity of Vigoro, sulphate of ammonia or some other concentrated type of fertilizer. Be careful, you may kill your tree with too much kindness.

## 7. *In Order to Prevent the too Rapid Evaporation of Moisture Should I Strip the Leaves from My Holly When I Plant?*

No. Stripping the leaves does definite harm. It is a disagreeable job at best, injures the bark of the *Holly* and harms the ends of the twigs. The bark of the *Holly* is little more than tender skin and care should always be taken not to harm it.

*Holly* in the wild would be injured far less if vandals at Christmas would cut cleanly instead of breaking or tearing the branches. Do not forget that at planting time a broken or split root should be cut cleanly, also. This is more important than many people realize.

Most nursery-grown *Holly* with a good, heavy root system and a compact top needs no thought about taking off the leaves. If you feel that you must follow this practice, just use pruning shears and cut the twigs back a few inches.

Many large trees can be helped by using a spray when they are moved. Some years ago a chemist for a large spray material firm worked weeks for me to perfect a paraffine emulsion for this purpose. The result was a non-injurious, cheap, easy-to-use material that looks like milk and does a fine job. I believe it should be used much more extensively. Its one fault seems to be that the sprayed tree looks white for weeks and so hurts the sale for me. I use it a lot when transplanting.

## 8. *What Is the Best Fertilizer for Holly?*

If plenty of leafmold is used, very little fertilizer is needed. A double handful of cottonseed meal put annually around each small tree—put three or four times as much around a six to eight-foot tree and a bucketful around a large tree—will make the leaves dark green and help its appearance. Such a *Holly* will bear more berries than one that is stunted or grows very slowly. Cottonseed meal is safe—you may use any quantity you wish.

Some *Holly* growers suggest the use of sulfate ammonia or some chemical nitrate. If the right quantity of these is used they are all right, but used too heavily they often cause harm. A *Holly* tree is too valuable to fool with. Use leafmold, cow manure (must be three years old) and cotton-seed meal.

## **9. Should Holly Be Watered Every Day?**

No. Use plenty of leafmold as suggested in answer to question two. Use lots of water when planting, and then once or twice a week until established. Do not "sprinkle," but soak when you water.

## **10. How Fast Will My Holly Grow?**

If your *Holly* is planted as previously suggested you will be surprised to see how fast it will grow. A ten-foot *Holly* will become a real big tree in five or six years. It will grow from a foot to eighteen inches annually. In the wild, *Hollies* vary, of course, but many do not grow more than two inches a year. Poor ground has much to do with this.

In connection with the above I would like to mention the fact that *Holly*, even in the nursery, does grow slowly during the first few years. Then, too, as a little tree it is seldom bushy, compact or shapely. Starting with the long time it takes to germinate a *Holly* seed—two years—the grower transplants the seedlings or rooted cuttings several times, cutting back the tops severely, so that it is often seven years or more before the nurseryman has a two-foot specimen *Holly* ready for you.

After your *Holly* has been brought through this slow, formative period it seems to suddenly find itself and develop quickly into a thing of real beauty.

## **11. How Long Will My Holly Live?**

Every *Holly* you plant ought to live for years and become more interesting and valuable each year. It has few diseases and insects bother it but little. One hundred years is not an uncommon age for *Holly* and there are many trees in south Jersey much older. Most of these trees are off the beaten path and seldom seen by tourists. Some of them are truly a beautiful sight each winter with

their heavy loads of red berries. Real old *Hollies* seem to bear much heavier than younger trees.

One magnificent specimen always interests me. It is on the bank of a creek several miles from the nearest settlement and is called by some of the oldest natives "*Indian Chief Holly*." Legend has it that many years ago an Indian chief, when on pilgrimages with his tribe after fish and oysters regularly camped under this very tree. Indians are said to have held the belief that "lightning never strikes a *Holly*."

## **12. Must I Have Both Male and Female Trees?**

Yes. The female or berry tree will bear only if fertilized with pollen from the male tree. Bees accomplish this and will often travel two miles, so your tree will bear if there is a male tree within a few blocks, but you will probably have more berries if there is a male tree in your own yard. One is enough for several berry trees. You do not have to have an equal number of each—try one male to ten female trees—and they do not have to be as close together as some people believe. But let me repeat, a female *Holly* will bear berries if there is a non-berry tree near enough for the bees to carry pollen to fertilize it, but you cannot be sure of the maximum number of berries unless you have at least one male in your own yard.

## **13. Can I Grow My Own Christmas Berries?**

Yes. Pruning will help almost every *Holly* tree; in fact, it is just about impossible to grow a very dense *Holly* without cutting back. If this is to be done one might as well cut at Christmas and enjoy the beautiful berries.

We have had for the past ten years all the *Holly* berries we have wanted annually for our own house decorating, cemetery lots, etc., have sent boxes of berries to friends and supplied hundreds of cuttings for propagating from a single *Holly* tree. This tree was six feet high when planted fifteen years ago and today is a beautiful thing, much thicker and better looking than it could possibly have been without Christmas pruning.

A few weeks ago a school teacher came to me and said, "I want to teach my children to get their Christmas *Holly* berries from thier own trees. How will I tell them to get the berries, cut off the

whole top of the tree or shall they cut off the lower branches?"

Either method would be entirely too drastic. You can do it in a much easier and better way.

Most *Holly* berries are borne near the tips of the branches, so just cut the heavy berry branches that stick out farthest from the tree. Cut them six to eighteen inches long, just enough to even up the shape of the tree. Do not cut big branches that would make large holes in the tree.

Some branches that are not very full of berries will stick out a little beyond the main outline of the tree; leave these, as they are almost sure to be the branches that will bear the heaviest next year.

Please do not be afraid to cut your tree. Illustration number four shows a tree that has been heavily pruned (does not mean that big branches have been taken out, just the tips of many branches for a number of years) and illustration number three a tree that would be a much more desirable one if it had had the same treatment.

If the above paragraph does not fully convince you of the desirability of heavy pruning of *Holly* trees I wish I could show you nature's own way. There is a *Holly* tree near Toms River, N. J., that bears more berries per square inch than any tree I have ever seen. Every year it is just red with berries, tons of them. And each year, when snow comes and feed gets scarce, red squirrels climb the tree and trim it. They cut thousands of the tips of berried branches, two to four inches long and drop them to the ground. These are carried away and the seeds eaten. This happens every year and the tree has developed into just about the finest specimen of its kind in the country.

## 14. *Can I Use Holly for A Hedge?*

Yes, *Holly* makes an evergreen hedge of real beauty the year through, and all winter the bright red berries add color to your garden. It attracts birds, too; cardinals will build deep in your hedge and stay with you the year round. *Holly* makes a most effective barrier to keep off animals and children; they will not bother it even when it is small and low. It is attractive as a low hedge and can easily be kept small if you like it that way, as it will stand the most severe pruning. Many people like their *Holly* hedge to grow tall and thick and heavy to form a background for their other planting. And it need never be replaced, as it will live

a hundred years. Its roots seem to harm the lawn or adjoining plantings less than those of most hedges. Try a *Holly* hedge, you will like it.

## 15. *At What Age Does Holly Begin to Bear?*

This is hard to answer because a *Holly* tree in good ground often grows much faster and bears berries in one-half the time of one in poor ground.

U. S. Bulletin No. 1693, "Growing Christmas Holly on the Farm," says: "Plants may first bear flowers at an age between five and twelve years." I find that the average *Holly* is about ten years old before it bears many berries, and that the heavy bearing ten-foot tree is about fifteen years old.

## 16. *My Holly Tree Blooms Every Year. Why Does It Not Bear Berries?*

You probably have a male tree. Both male and female trees bloom, the male often the heaviest. One can tell the sex at blooming time. The female or berry tree has the solitary blossoms on single stems, while the male or non-berry tree always has the solitary blossom on single stems in multiple, like cherries, two, three or four in a cluster.

If your tree is a female tree, but does not produce berries, then there is a lack of the fertilizing pollen and a male tree should be planted.

## 17. *Why Am I Advised to Buy Transplanted Holly?*

*Holly* from the wild is hard to make live because of its poor root system. Most people are surprised to learn that *Holly* trees in their native woods often have root systems that reach out almost twice as far as the height of the tree. Such trees when moved have a large part of their root system cut off. Illustration No. 5.

Nursery grown, transplanted *Hollies* have a mass of fine, short roots and are much easier to make live. In fact, our nursery grown, three or four times transplanted *Hollies* are proving much safer to move than many of our so-called common evergreens. Illustration No. 6.

When you buy *Holly* it will pay you to be sure that it has been nursery grown and several times transplanted.

## 18. Is Native New Jersey Holly the Same As That Which Grows in the South?

Yes, *Ilex Opaca* grows wild along most of our Eastern seaboard. It is the same *Holly* whether found in Rhode Island or South Carolina. There is this most important fact, though: *Holly* grown in central New Jersey—at present, the most northern point along the coast where it can be found in commercial quantities—is more hardy and compact than that grown further south (along the coast).

If you want to plant *Holly* south of Philadelphia you need think very little of its source or where it was grown before you got it. Just be sure that it has a good root system. But, if you are north of Philadelphia or in the hills west of the coastal plain, be sure to get *Holly* from a northern source.

EARLE DILATUSH,

ROBBINSVILLE, N. J.



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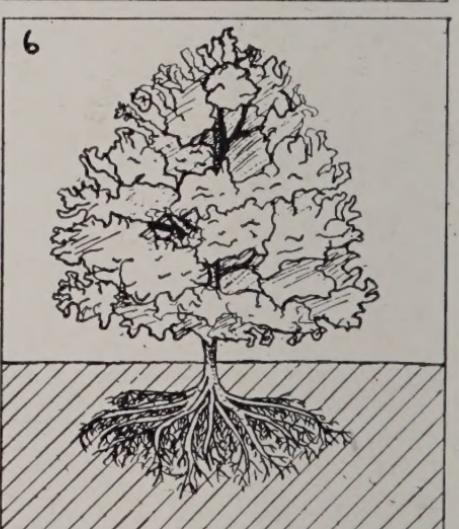
UNPRUNED



PRUNED



LONG, TENDER ROOTS  
DUE TO INSUFFICIENT  
TRANSPLANTING



COMPACT BALL OF FINE ROOTS  
DUE TO  
FREQUENT MOVING